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Viewing cable 09LIMA1561, HUMALA: HEDGING BETS IN RUN UP TO ELECTIONS

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09LIMA1561**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09LIMA1561	2009-10-21 20:13	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Lima

Appears in these articles:

<http://elcomercio.pe/>

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPE #1561/01 2942013
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 212013Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1387
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 0087
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 0047
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8600
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 4170
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1517
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT 5325
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9840
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 0080
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 0075
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 001561

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: HUMALA: HEDGING BETS IN RUN UP TO ELECTIONS

REF: A. LIMA 637
[B](#). 05 LIMA 4132
[C](#). 05 LIMA 4854

Classified...
id: 230714
date: 10/21/2009 20:13
refid: 09LIMA1561
origin: Embassy Lima
classification: CONFIDENTIAL
destination: 05LIMA4132|05LIMA4854|09LIMA637
header:
VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPE #1561/01 2942013
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 212013Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1387

INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 0087
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 0047
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8600
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 4170
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1517
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT 5325
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9840
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 0080
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 0075
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMIAAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 001561

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [PE](#)

SUBJECT: HUMALA: HEDGING BETS IN RUN UP TO ELECTIONS

REF: A. LIMA 637

[B](#). 05 LIMA 4132

[C](#). 05 LIMA 4854

Classified By: Amb P. Michael McKinley for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Opposition leader Ollanta Humala -- who nearly won the 2006 presidential elections on a populist platform -- heads a Peruvian Nationalist Party (PNP) pursuing an ambiguous dual-track political path. According to insiders, the party continues to have "one foot inside and the other foot outside" of the formal political system, and several factions have been fighting over which path to choose in the run up to regional and national elections. Humala's decision to create some level of association with radical groups has resulted in one recent high-level defection from the party so far. Whatever his final tack, Humala is likely to be in the presidential mix in 2011 -- unless Peru's latent mass of disenchanted voters find someone they believe better suited to bear the anti-system flag. End Summary.

One Foot In, the Other Out

[2](#). (C) Opposition leader Ollanta Humala -- who nearly won the 2006 presidential elections on a populist platform -- heads a Peruvian Nationalist Party (PNP) in search of its true identity. The party has swung between opposing approaches since its inception, seeking to make itself broadly palatable by assuming moderate positions and eschewing open talk of radical measures while also maintaining its credentials as an anti-system group dedicated to profound "nationalist" reform (refs B and C.) In a conversation with the Ambassador earlier this year, Humala suggested he was keeping his options open and quietly coordinating with radical groups (ref A). Nadine Heredia, Humala's wife and advisor and a key PNP leader, told us more recently that the party continues to have "one foot inside and the other foot outside" of the formal political system, describing the party's vigorous work within Congress and its willingness, as necessary, to assume more radical positions to oppose what she characterized as Peru's corrupt and unjust social and political order.

Infighting Over Approach

[3](#). (C) Several party factions have been fighting over which path to choose in the run up to the 2010 regional elections and the subsequent national elections in 2011. Publicly, this dispute has centered over the PNP's reported effort to forge a broad left-of-center coalition, and include radical fringe groups such as Patria Roja, (MRTA front organization) Patria Libre and others in it. Humala himself has made public statements indicating an interest in working with any group that "wants to change the country." According to some reports, Humala has made a political decision to maintain (at a minimum) some level of association with radical groups, reportedly opening a "frente amplio" office in a Lima suburb and holding periodic meetings, even though he recently publicly denied any intention to form an electoral agreement with these groups. Some PNP leaders, including Congressman Daniel Abugattas, have argued that bringing radical groups into the PNP tent gives them leverage they would otherwise lack, and undermines the party's authority and leadership. Abugattas' advisors told us recently that Humala had already been pressured into taking several controversial public positions as a result of this dynamic, which had damaged the party's image.

[4](#). (C) Nadine Heredia told us the PNP talks to "everyone," and was open to alliances with other groups on the left. She underscored that one important exception to this rule was Sendero Luminoso, which the PNP rejected and against whom her husband had fought as an Army officer at the height of the

terrorist insurgency. According to news and other reports, the return as a close advisor to the party of longtime leftist ideologue Carlos Tapia, who had reportedly distanced himself from Humala after the 2006 election loss, was one of the driving forces behind the PNP's move to forge alliances with all comers, including those on the radical fringe. That a former staffer to PNP Congresswoman and cocalero leader Nancy Obregon's was recently caught transporting 140 kilos of cocaine suggests the party's radical associations extend to drug-trafficking (vice mere coca growing) interests as well.

15. (C) Another factor in Humala's dual strategy relates to electoral strategy. According to party insiders, to avoid a collapse similar to that of the 2006 regional and municipal elections (in which the PNP fared poorly), Humala has chosen to field candidates in the 2010 regional elections that fly under a non-PNP banner as "regional fronts." At the same time, the party plans to maintain a loose association with these fronts, hence the reaching out. The reasoning behind this strategy, insiders say, is that the PNP will be able to claim victory if "its" candidates win, and thereby gain momentum in the approach to 2011, while avoiding too close an association with candidates who lose, which could hamper the PNP's national aspirations.

High-Level Defection

16. (C) Internal dissent over the PNP's approach has resulted in one recent high-level defection from the party so far, that of Congressman Isaac Mekler. After publicly questioning what he called the party's dangerous association with radical actors, Mekler formally bolted from the party in early October, declaring himself a political independent. Following the break, Mekler accused Humala of having been induced by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez into an association with such groups as the New Left (Nueva Izquierda), the Socialist Party, Patria Libre and other fringe groups. Mekler's follows the earlier defections of other former Humala allies, most of whom left the PNP fold immediately after the 2006 elections. Whether rooted in real ideological disagreements or simple personal interests, it could also presage more departures in the future. For example, we have heard that indigenous leaders within the PNP have also grown restive and some, chafing under the party's autocratic leadership and claiming Humala has sought to use them politically while giving them little in return, are considering breaking ties with the party and throwing their support to alternative candidates.

Humala in the Mix

17. (C) Internal tensions notwithstanding, Humala is likely to be in the presidential mix in 2011. More than any other prominent political figure, he continues most fully to embody the "political opposition" for most Peruvians; and, while notoriously fickle, poll numbers consistently place him among the top 5 candidates for president in 2011. In addition, the PNP is one of the few political parties with a national structure, and probably the only one (apart from the Fujimoristas) with an active political network in Peru's impoverished rural communities -- a significant electoral advantage.

Comment: Competing for Anti-System Vote

18. (C) Not alone in the anti-system wild, other candidates are likely to compete with Humala over Peru's overlapping nationalist, leftist, opposition political turf. These could include Congresswoman Keiko Fujimori (daughter of the former President), former Prime Minister Yehude Simon, and anti-mining activist and Catholic priest, Padre Marco Arana, who has already formed his "Tierra y Libertad" political party. In our recent conversation with her, Nadine Heredia's dismissive attitude toward Humala's potential political rivals struck us as thinly veiled concern about having to compete for the political space that became her husband's alone in 2006. Finally, if Peru's recent electoral past is precedent, the prospect of a previously little known, last-minute candidate surging to occupy the anti-system segment of Peru's political spectrum -- a la Fujimori in 1990, Toledo in 2001 and Humala himself in 2006 -- can hardly be ruled out. This historical pattern also explains Humala's strategy of keeping at least one foot outside a system in which a still significant percentage of Peru's voters have little faith.

MCKINLEY

=====CABLE ENDS=====